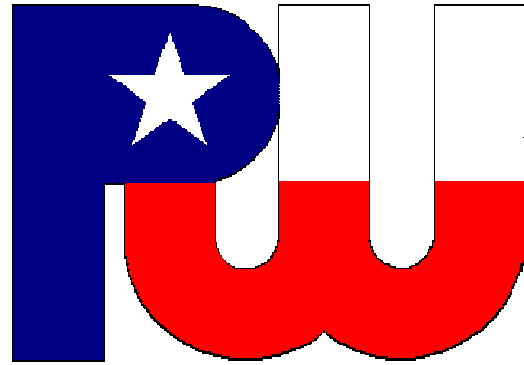


CITY OF HOUSTON
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS & ENGINEERING



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
For
SCHOOL ZONE INSTALLATION AND REMOVAL

Effective December 2004



CITY OF HOUSTON

Public Works & Engineering Department

School Coordination Program

PO Box 1562 Houston, TX 77251-1562
Phone (713) 837-7280 Fax (713)837-7277

Introduction

The city has an ongoing Schools Coordination Program where we work with school principals or their designated representatives to develop a master plan for creating safe and efficient school zones which balance pedestrian safety and roadway mobility needs.

School speed zones are installed where students cross or are likely to cross roadways by themselves but may not have a level of mental cognizance to do so safely. As the school's principal is in overall responsible charge for all activities associated with a school, we do not respond specifically to requests from the community at large but do present any suggestions we may receive to the principal for consideration.

Please feel free to contact our School Coordinator, at 713-837-7280 if you have additional questions.

The following is a summary of the process for school zone application and installation.

Request for Study

A request can be made by either the principal of the school or by the principal's appointee. Each request must include a name, address and phone number of the principal, the school name and school hours. Written requests should be submitted to Public Works and Engineering (Department) at the above address. An application form can be obtained from the Department. A request may not automatically be withdrawn from consideration once a traffic study determines the street to be eligible for a school zone.

The request must be for specific street segments and should include at least the following information:

- The requested street name
- The boundary of the street segment
- Associated school

Requests will be evaluated during the school's calendar year, however the schedule and process do not preclude the Department from installing and removing warranted school zones when and where it is deemed necessary outside the procedures of this program.

Eligibility

In order for a request to qualify for consideration, the street must meet criteria set by the Department. It is the responsibility of the Department to conduct traffic studies to determine if the street segment meets the following criteria:

- * The street must be a part of the school's Safe Route to School Plan or border the school's property line.
- * The school must be clearly defined as an elementary or middle/junior high school.

Only those requests meeting all the eligibility requirements will proceed. If a request is denied, applicants will not be able to reapply to the school coordination program unless there is considerable change in conditions.

All engineering studies will be scheduled during school traffic hours when the related pedestrian and vehicular traffic are at their peaks. An engineering investigation may often include a survey to determine the number of pedestrians crossing at a certain location as well as measurements of volume, direction, and speed of vehicular traffic.

Other factors such as terrain, roadway geometry, age of children and availability of sidewalks will also be considered in the engineering investigation.

Safe Route to School Plan

The most important aspect of a school safety program is the establishment of a continuing school trip safety process. The participants in the process must involve at least three agencies (police, traffic and transportation, and schools) plus a strong involvement from parents. While the process is a systematic approach by members of a team, any traffic technical analyses and recommendations must be developed under the direction of a qualified professional engineer.

A school trip safety program consists of six phases aimed at providing a safe trip for school aged pedestrians on their way to and from school:

Setting up the School Trip Safety Process - In order to address any complex issue, it is helpful to develop a documented process so that engineers, school administrators, police, teachers, and parents all understand the procedures and their respective roles in the process. Such a process is essential to school pedestrian traffic safety because it establishes good communication and understanding of the problems and solutions.

Identification of Deficiencies in Routes – Route deficiency identification involves an inventory of traffic and pedestrian facilities as well as characteristics of the vehicles and pedestrians using those facilities. After determination of the existing situation, the designated routes may be selected. The routes are examined for deficiencies against the system criteria. Qualified traffic and safety engineers working for the city of Houston should develop the criteria which are used to identify school route safety problems.

Designated Route Map for the Trip to School. A clear, accurate map detailing designated school walk routes that is widely distributed will reduce confusion about routes and crossing locations. Once routes are established, safety controls can be applied to specified streets and crossings.

Selection of Route Improvements and Control Measures. The next step is the selection of measures to improve problem areas. Considerable attention must be given to traffic control warrants for such improvements as signs, pavement markings, traffic signals, crossing guards, walkways, and grade separations.

Implementation of Route Improvements. Implementation of these measures follows the selection of the appropriate improvements for the identified school walk route problems. Public acceptance of the planned improvements is very important, and sufficient information must be on hand at all times to reinforce the need for specific planned improvements and why certain other improvements were not recommended.

Periodic Evaluation of Routes. Extensive effort should be made to assure quality annual evaluations are conducted on the designated school routes and crossings. A good evaluation program will provide data that will make future decisions easier and may help improve public attitude about certain traffic control measures.

Installation of Reduced Speed School Zones - Signs

Reduced speed zones are installed on streets that surround the school and are identified in each schools Safe Route to School Plan. All traffic signs shall conform to the standards and specifications provided in the Texas Manual on Uniform Control Devices (TMUTCD) with regard to their design, dimensions, lettering and placement.

Signs such as “Children at Play” or “Slow Children at Play” are not authorized by the Texas MUTCD and cannot be installed by the COH.

If the Department determines the street to be eligible for a school zone, the Department will provide a preliminary Safe Route to School map to the contact person.

School zone times shall be established and installed according to the following guidelines:

Morning Times – 45 minutes before take-up and 15 minutes after take-up
Evening Times – 15 minutes before dismissal and 30 minutes after dismissal

Each school shall provide crossing guards for special programs, staggered take-up and early dismissals.

Installation of Reduced Speed School Zones – Flashing Beacons

Reduced speed zones are installed on streets that surround the school and are identified in each school's Safe Route to School Plan. All traffic signs and flashing beacons shall conform to the standards and specifications provided in the Texas Manual on Uniform Control Devices (TMUTCD) with regard to their design, dimensions, lettering and placement.

Signs such as "Children at Play" or "Slow Children at Play" are not authorized by the Texas MUTCD and cannot be installed by the COH.

Flashing beacons will be installed on designated major thoroughfares or collectors and on streets with an average daily traffic count of 5000 cars or greater.

If the Department determines the street to be eligible for a school zone, the Department will provide a preliminary Safe Route to School map to the contact person.

Flashing School zone times shall be established and installed according to the following guidelines:

Morning Times – 45 minutes before take-up and 15 minutes after take-up
Evening Times – 15 minutes before dismissal and 30 minutes after dismissal

Each school shall provide crossing guards for special programs and early dismissals.

Installation of Parking Restrictions, Bus Zones, Etc.

In order to promote safe and efficient traffic circulation around a school. It may be necessary to regulate, restrict or prohibit parking, stopping, or standing adjacent to the school grounds or at an established school crossing. The legend on the parking sign shall state the applicable regulation. All signs shall conform to the standards for shape, color, position and used as specified in the TMUTCD. Generally, parking signs should display the following information as appropriate, from top to bottom of the sign, in the order listed:

- a. Restriction or prohibition
- b. Time of day it is applicable, if not at all hours
- c. Days of weeks applicable, if not every day

If the Department determines the street to be eligible for parking restrictions, the Department will provide a preliminary Safe Route to School map to the contact person.

Installation of Crosswalks

Markings have definite and important functions to perform in proper scheme of school area traffic control. In some cases, they are used to supplement the regulations or warnings of other devices such as traffic signs. In other instances, they obtain results, solely on their own merits, that cannot be obtained by the use of any other device. In such cases, they serve as an effective means of conveying certain regulations and earnings that could not otherwise be made clearly understandable.

Crosswalks are painted white lines on the street that primarily guide the pedestrian and, secondarily, alert motorist that pedestrians may be present. Crosswalks are located to enhance the utilization of sidewalks, to serve school routes and to define the appropriate crossing area in the street at high pedestrian volume intersections.

When reviewing an area for installation of a crosswalk, many factors are considered. Some of the important factors include:

- a. Volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic,
- b. Average vehicular speed,
- c. Type of traffic (domestic, commercial, highway, etc.)
- d. Terrain,
- e. Visibility available to motorist and pedestrians,
- f. Type of traffic controls present,
- g. Width of street to be crossed,
- h. Proximity to school and school walking route, and
- i. Location of adjacent crosswalks.

If the Department determines the street to be eligible for crosswalks, the Department will provide a preliminary Safe Route to School map to the contact person.

Installation of ALL WAY Stop Signs

Since “All-Way” stop signs cause interruptions to the traffic stream regardless of the presence of pedestrian traffic, their use as school traffic control device is discouraged unless specific volume and pedestrian warrants are met. “All-Way” stop signs may create unnecessary delay when no school activity is present at the intersection and breed disrespect among drivers when installed without appropriate school and pedestrian traffic. Other forms of crossing protection, such as an Adult School Crossing Guard or a traffic signal, should be considered over an “All-Way” stop. However, when traffic and pedestrian volume at an established school crossing are approaching the warrant requirements specified by the TMUTCD, installing an “All-Way” stop will be considered.

If the Department determines the street to be eligible for ALL WAY Stop signs, the Department will provide a preliminary Safe Route to School map to the contact person.

Installation of Traffic Signals

A traffic signal may be installed at an established school crossing based solely on school pedestrian and vehicular traffic. A school signal may be warranted at an established school crossing when a traffic engineering investigation of pedestrian group size and available gaps in vehicular traffic stream indicates that the number of gaps in the traffic stream during the period the children are using the crossing is less than the number of minutes in that engineering investigation. When a traffic signal is installed based solely on school pedestrian and vehicular traffic, pedestrian indications shall be provided on each crosswalk. Furthermore the signal should be programmed for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Every attempt to fit the signal into a progression system should be made when installed under the School Crossing Warrant.

If the Department determines the street to be eligible for a traffic signal, the Department will provide a preliminary Safe Route to School map that indicates its location to the contact person.



CITY OF HOUSTON

Public Works & Engineering Department

School Coordination Program

PO Box 1562 Houston, TX 77251-1562
Phone (713) 837-7280 Fax (713) 837-7290

Request for School Zone Study

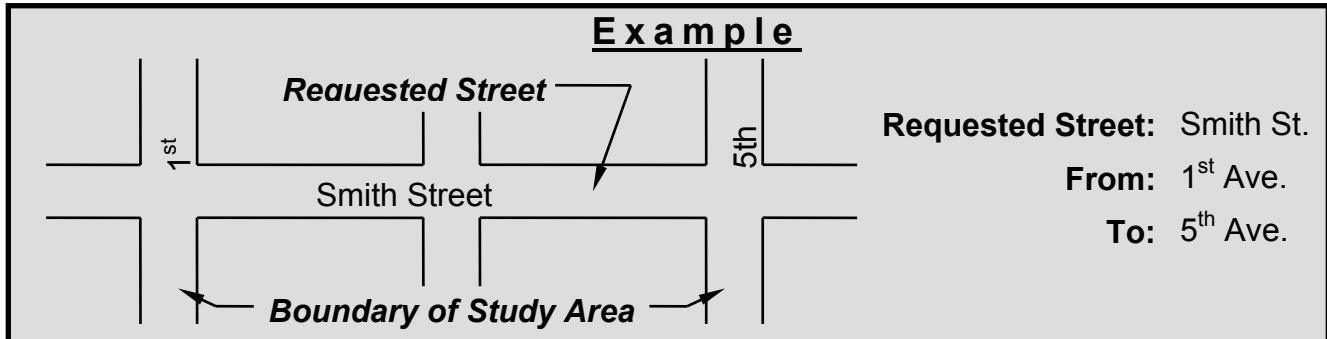
The following is a request for a school zone, crosswalk, parking restrictions, stop sign and traffic signal installation. Please feel free to submit this form as a formal request. Each request must contain the completed information as indicated. The request will be processed according to the procedures detailed in the School Coordination Policies and Procedures. Please indicate what type of installation you are requesting:

_____ School Zone Study _____ Parking Restrictions _____ Bus Zone

_____ Crosswalk Installation _____ Stop Sign _____ Traffic Signal

Requested Street Information

Each request must provide the name of the street on which a study is requested, and the boundaries of the street segment. Traffic studies will be conducted only within the boundaries indicated. Please use streets for boundary limits, not block ranges.



Requested Street: _____ **From:** _____ **To:** _____

Requested Street: _____ **From:** _____ **To:** _____

Requested Street: _____ **From:** _____ **To:** _____

Requested Street: _____ **From:** _____ **To:** _____

Contact Information

Each request must be completed and signed by the principal.

Name of School _____

Principal's Name _____ **Designated Appointee** _____

Address _____ **Zip Code** _____

School District _____ **Contact Phone #** _____

School Hours _____ **Fax #** _____

Email Address _____

Principal's Signature _____ **Date** _____



CITY OF HOUSTON

Public Works & Engineering Department

School Zone- Removal

PO Box 1562 Houston, TX 77251-1562
Phone (713) 837-7280 Fax (713)837-7288

Introduction

The city has an ongoing Schools Coordination Program where we work with school principals or their designated representatives to develop a master plan for creating safe and efficient school zones which balance pedestrian safety and roadway mobility needs.

School speed zones are installed where students cross or are likely to cross roadways by themselves but may not have a level of mental cognizance to do so safely. As the school's principal is in overall responsible charge for all activities associated with a school, we do not respond specifically to requests from the community at large but do present any suggestions we may receive to the principal for consideration.

Please feel free to contact our School Coordinator, at 713-837-7280 if you have additional questions.

The following is a summary of the process for school zone removal.

Request for a Removal

A request to remove a school zone must be received from the school principal. Each request must include a name, address and phone number of the principal. The principal will receive all correspondence. Written requests should be submitted to Public Works and Engineering (Department) at the above address. An application form can be obtained from the Department. A request may not automatically be withdrawn from consideration once a traffic study determines the street to be eligible for removal of the school zone.

The request must be for a specific street segment and should include at least the following information:

- * The requested street name
- * The boundary of the street segment
- * Associated school

Eligibility

In order for a request to qualify for consideration,

- * The school must be closed or scheduled to be closed.
- * Changes in pedestrian activity have occurred, such as rezoning, consolidation of facilities etc.

Only those requests meeting the above eligibility requirements will proceed.

All traffic investigations will be scheduled during regular commuter periods unless a specific weekend problem is noted in the request.

School Zone Removal

If the Department determines the school zones along a street segment to be eligible for removal consideration, the Department will provide existing location maps to the contact person. The contact person is encouraged to review proposed changes to the school's zone.

Upon review the Department will submit a request that will be reviewed by city council to remove the requested school zone. Once the request for council action has been approved, the requested school zone will be removed.



CITY OF HOUSTON

Public Works & Engineering Department

School Coordination Program - Removal

PO Box 1562 Houston, TX 77251-1562
Phone (713) 837-7280 Fax (713) 837-7290

Request for Removal Study

This is a request for removing school zones. Please feel free to submit this form as a formal request. Each request must contain the completed information as indicated. The request will be processed according to the procedures detailed in the School Coordination Program.

Street Study Information

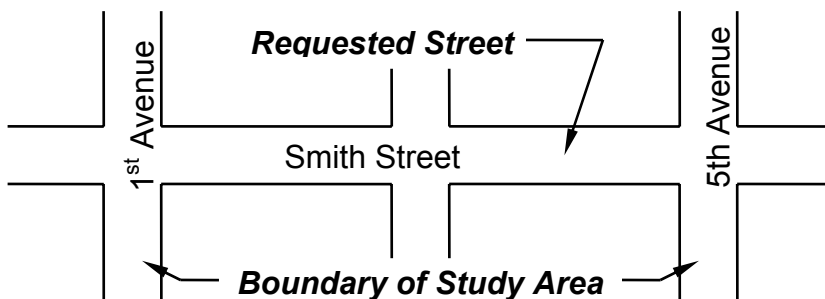
Each request must provide the name of the street on which a study is requested, and the boundaries of the street segment. Traffic studies will be conducted only within the boundaries indicated. Please use streets for boundary limits, not block ranges.

Requested Street:

From:

To:

Example



Requested Street: Smith St.

From: 1st Ave.

To: 5th Ave.

B. Contact Person Information

Each request must provide the principal's contact information.

Name

Address:

City:

ZIP Code:

Ph. #:

I am confirming that _____ is closed or will be closing on _____.

I am confirming that the safe route to _____ has changed and needs to be removed.

Signature of Principal:

Date:

DEFINITIONS

Department - The Department of Public Works and Engineering, which includes the Director or designated representatives.

School Zone – A roadway segment identified by warning signs only as an area where children cross or are likely to cross that roadway.

School Speed Zone – A zone that is used to indicate where a reduced speed zone for a school area has been established in accordance with law based upon an engineering study.

Traffic Control Device – All signs, signals, markings and devices placed on, over, or adjacent to a street or highway by authority of a public body or official having jurisdiction in order to regulate, warn or guide vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Uncontrolled Crossing – An established school crossing location, either at an intersection or mid-block, where the continuous movement of vehicular traffic is not interrupted by a stop sign or traffic signal.

Controlled Crossing – An established school crossing location, either at an intersection or a mid-block, where the continuous movement of vehicular traffic is interrupted by a stop sign or traffic signal.

85th Percentile Speed – The measured speed at which 85 percent of the drivers are traveling at or below.

Posted Speed Limit – The legal speed limit which vehicular traffic may travel and is displayed by the posting of the regulatory speed limit sign. On streets where no speed limit sign is posted, the posted speed limit is defined as prima facie speed limit of 30 m.p.h.

Pedestrian Indications – Special traffic signal indications intended for the exclusive purpose of controlling pedestrian traffic and consisting of the illuminated words WALK and Don't WALK or the illuminated symbols of a walking person (symbolizing WALK) and an upraised palm (symbolizing DON'T WALK).

Sight Distance – The length of roadway ahead visible to the driver.

May – A permissive condition. No requirement for design or application is intended.

Should – An advisory condition. Where the word “should” is used, it is considered to be advisable usage, recommended but not mandatory.

Shall – A mandatory condition where certain requirements in the design and application of the devices are described with the “shall” stipulation, it is mandatory when an installation is made that these requirements are met.

Major Thoroughfare or Major Collector – A street designated respectively as a Major Thoroughfare or Major Collector on the City's Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan's Street Hierarchy Classification.

Take-Up – The start time at which 85% of students begin classes.

Dismissal – The dismissal time at which 85% of students end classes.